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626 father's discretion. In former times a father might slay an
834 unchaste daughter, just as a husband could put an adulterous wife to death; this is now expressly forbidden by law, and does not in fact seem to have been the usual fate of erring women, even when it was permitted.

The law is thus, even now, severe, but in practice such cases hardly ever come before the courts. The idea of invoking the law in a public court in matters of this intimate nature is extremely distasteful to the Min Chia, as to the Chinese. These things are family matters to be settled by and in the family itself, or with the assistance of relatives as arbitrators. For this reason it is usually impossible to hear of cases of the graver sexual offences such as incest, for such
583 things are never made public. On the other hand the abduction of girls—with their own consent—is a common event, and admitted to be so. This, of course, comes strictly within the criminal category of seducing an unmarried girl, but it is rare that the case is brought to court.

To understand why this is so needs a word of explanation. Marriage among the Min Chia is arranged by the parents, the parties themselves not being permitted as much as to see one another before the wedding ceremony, and the betrothal often takes place when both children are still almost infants. There is thus no legitimate free sexual selection, no means of legalising the love which a chance meeting may have kindled in an unbetrothed pair. The Min Chia, however, are no more rigidly bound by their own conventions than other peoples, and thus when a young man and a girl meeting and loving by chance, refuse to renounce their passion, there is only one way out. The man abducts the girl and endeavours to get her to his own home. If he succeeds, after a more or less prolonged wrangle between the parents of both parties, and the parents of those to whom the erring couple were betrothed, the marriage is at last recognised, the customary

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gifts are exchanged, and the quarrel is appeased. But when 583
the abduction takes place the girl's father is bound in honour to call out his male relations and retainers and start a pursuit. This has all the appearance of a serious chase, the pursuers are armed with swords or firearms, and travel fast, enquiring after the runaways as they go, while the latter try to avoid main tracks and frequented ways. One is constantly told that if the pursuers overtook them a fight would follow and the seducer would be in danger of his life, and the girl in danger of being dragged home to face the wrath, and possible violence of her father. All the same one may doubt this romantic assertion.

It does not appear, in fact, that the Min Chia Lochinvars are ever brought to bay. In spite of the difficulty of escaping in a country where roads are few and mountain barriers make detours almost impossible, the erring couples always seem to get away. This is the more odd as a Min Chia girl, though she has not got bound feet, can hardly be expected to travel much faster than her male relatives, lightly loaded and hurrying in pursuit. But how embarrassing it would be for all parties if the pursuit was successful! The relatives would be forced, from "face", to fight, perhaps even to kill, the seducer of one of their womenfolk. That would mean not only an unpleasant feud with his family, but also the death of the only person who could now be expected, indeed, required, to marry the girl. No Min Chia father wants a girl returned to him, her honour lost, her marriage cancelled, and the only man who could take her off his hands, dead. On the other hand, provided the seducer escapes, and a decent show of pursuit is made, all can be settled, if not for the best, at least on tolerable conditions.

The parents of the boy to whom the girl was betrothed 582
have to be soothed and perhaps compensated for the loss of face their son has undergone in being so manifestly scorned

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883 462 manners of the men. A girl is perhaps not as unprotected and alone as she seems, for if any young man attempted to insult her or misbehave, the other women present and the older men would at once put a stop to it. The Min Chia, although a lively, talkative and gay people, have an admirable code of public behaviour and an innate sense of decorum.

Girls and women do other heavy work, made possible by the fact that they never had the Chinese custom of foot [482] binding. A large part of the porterage of goods from the lake shore to the city and from Hsia Kuan is done by women and girls, who also do most of the grass cutting on the higher slopes of the mountain. They assist in the handling [533 461] of boats, and in planting rice fields. This work is usually done by a group of girls working together, who beguile the time by singing improvised songs, always using the same traditional tune. The same kind of song, to the same tune with its prolonged falling final note, is sung by boatmen and by grass cutters on the mountain, and, while the tune is always the same the words are made up for the occasion.

582 When a girl is seventeen years old, or a boy nineteen to twenty, the Min Chia consider it time for them to marry. In practice they will already have been betrothed since childhood and the only thing to be decided is the day which, in accordance with the horoscope of the engaged 583 pair, is most suitable and auspicious for the marriage. The betrothal, which is sometimes concluded when the children are quite small, is arranged by a marriage-broker, usually an elderly woman or man acquainted with both families, for the future bride and groom must never meet before the marriage, and it is not considered good taste for the two families to negotiate directly. The marriage-broker receives no fee for his trouble, but he acts as president of the marriage feast, and is usually the kind of person who

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finds sufficient reward in being allowed, or invited, to 583
arrange the lives of others.

One of his most important duties is to get the two families to agree on the value of the presents which the father of the bridegroom must make to the father of the bride. The bridegroom must not only buy silver jewellery for the bride, but also make a cash payment which is never less than fifty silver dollars, and may exceed one hundred. This payment is in many ways similar to the "bride price" payment in vogue in other countries, for it is regarded as a compensation to the bride's father for the loss of his daughter, and for the money he has spent in educating her. This factor indeed largely determines the value of the sum paid. A girl who has had no schooling cannot expect to receive a large sum, while one who has passed through the elementary school, and still more the Middle School, commands, as it were, a high figure. Although a girl once married is looked upon as a member of her husband's family, it would not be correct to say that the Min Chia sell their daughters like slaves. A woman has rights as well as duties, and it would be no truer to say that the Min Chia sold their daughters than to say that a European father gives a dowry to induce some man to take his daughter off his hands.

The custom of receiving a cash payment when a girl is married acts as a salutary check to the over-importance attached to male children, due to the influence of Ancestor Worship. Even if a father were devoid of natural affection, and only valued his sons as continuers of the Ancestral Worship, he would still have to value his daughters as worth so much to him on marriage. But in practice, the Min Chia, who are very fond of children, are loth to part with their daughters, and they look upon the marriage payment as a compensation for this necessary separation rather than as a

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583 commercial transaction. For the same reason they are never very willing to arrange a marriage with a family living in some distant place, and since they do not follow the Chinese rule of exogamy, they are not often forced to look for a daughter-in-law or son-in-law outside the circle of their acquaintances or relations. It must also be remembered that in a country where large families are common, the father has to pay out as much for the marriage of his sons as he is likely to receive for the marriage of his daughters.

585 When the arrangements have been made to the satisfaction of both parties, and the payments made, a lucky day is chosen from the calendar, in which the days appropriate to weddings are marked. This means that quite often there will be several weddings in the same village or neighbourhood on the same day, and this occasionally leads to ludicrous, but rather tragic, complications. If poor, the bride has to go to her husband's home on foot, and alone, followed at a short distance by some relatives, usually not the parents. But in practice only the poorest of the poor are unable to afford a sedan chair for this rare occasion. The almost universal custom is for the bride to be sent to her future home alone in a sedan chair gaily decorated with red paper rosettes and streamers. The chair is closed, for it would not do for the chair bearers to see the face of another man's bride, and it is not accompanied by any of her relatives. This, at least, used to be the case, but since mistakes sometimes happened, it is now quite common for one or two of her male relatives to ride along with the bridal chair till it reaches the husband's home.

This precaution is taken, not to guard the girl against some intrusion or rudeness, but to prevent the occurrence of the ludicrous mistakes referred to above. It used to happen that when several weddings took place on the same day, and the brides were carried unaccompanied to their future

Mewu

The marriage age as a rule is between the 15th and 18th year. 581
There is considerable sexual intercourse before marriage, but a 792
couple marries when a child is born. There are love matches and matches arranged by a third person who even in the case of marriage for love, is sent by the young man to the family of his beloved. If there is only one son, he becomes a lama, if there are two sons, the older one stays at home and the younger becomes a lama; often all the sons except the first-born enter a lamasery. It even happens that all the sons join a lamasery. In that case, or if there is no son, a son-in-law must be adopted. These sons-in-law are as a rule ex-lamas who did not like the life of the lamasery. Thus there is /70/ always a shortage of eligible males, and yet there are no older unmarried women. Polygyny is uncommon, except among very wealthy people. Polyandry which occurs in parts of Tibet is not customary among the Mewu-Fantzu. The sons who become lamas are sent into the lamasery when they are 8 to 10 years old.

Among the Mewu-Fantzu the tent nomads and the sedentary 563
Fantzu intermarry. It is, however, said to be more distinctive for 581
a tent nomad to marry a woman from a resident family. (1) She likes

1. This statement of my interpreter contradicts what Ekvall 4), page 76, says, namely, that the nomads are always more highly esteemed than the sedentary Fantzu.

to go into a tent, provided her husband has means. Conversely a sedentary Fantzu can marry a nomad woman without being discredited. There are also marriagesbetween Chinese and Mohammedans on the one hand and nomads on the other. A Chinese or a Mohammedan may marry a nomad woman, but a man who is a nomad may not marry a Chinese woman because she does not understand the work a nomad woman has to perform. A family of nomads gains in social standing if a Chinese man marries a woman of the family. Hence the nomads do not always demand a marriage fee from the Chinese, at any rate not a large one. Usually the Chinese man is obliged to give only a yak. The Mongols living in the province of Kansu have no contact with the Mewu-Fantzu.

If it is a love match, neither the parents nor other relatives have 583
any influence in the choice of a man. The wedding gift is paid in yaks, and consists of one to five yaks, depending on the wealth of the man's family. If a son-in-law is adopted, the family of the girl must give the family of the man one or two yaks, provided the son does not come from a family living away, in which case nothing